

TWO
S E R M O N S,

PREACHED IN
HIS MAJESTY'S CHAPEL

A T
W H I T E H A L L.

[Price 1s.]

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A T
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S E R M O N I.

ST. MARK xvi. 16.

HE THAT BELIEVETH, AND IS BAP-
TIZED, SHALL BE SAVED.

THE assertion, that any person
“shall be saved,” conveys, pro-
bably, to an illiterate English ear, in
every passage where it occurs, an explicit
assurance of unalienable salvation.

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BEFORE,

BEFORE, however, we affix this large signification to the clause in the text, we should recollect, that Simon the forcerer, whom Saint Peter (in the eighth chapter, ver. 21, 22, 23, of the Acts) represents as consummately depraved *, and in a state of reprobation †, is previously declared, in ver. 13 of the same chapter, “to have believed, and to have been

* Thy heart is not right in the sight of God, Ch. viii. ver. 21.

I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. Ch. viii. ver. 23.

† Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee. Ch. viii. ver. 22.

“baptized.”

“baptized *.” The forcerer was, consequently, according to the strict tenor of St. Mark’s position in the text, a “saved” man, at the very season when St. Peter drew so unfavourable a delineation of his moral character, and celestial interests.

THE term “saved,” therefore, being strictly applicable, in St. Mark’s mode of employing it, to a guilty and unpardoned forcerer, could not possibly have been intended by that Evangelist to describe a person endowed with an unquestionable title to salvation.

* Then Simon himself *believed* also, and *when he was baptized*, he continued with Philip, &c. Ch. viii. ver. 13.

THE adjunct “saved,” in fact, is one, amongst others *, which, in the Old Testament, is applied to the whole Jewish nation; and which, in the New Testament, comprehends often indiscriminately all persons participating Christian communion.

WHEN two bodies of men, enjoying separate privileges, are promiscuously denominated by one common set of phrases, we naturally suspect an affinity to subsist between their respective immunities.

* *Called, elect, chosen.* See the 6th, 7th, and 8th pages of this Discourse. Compare too the second and sixth Chapters of Mr. Taylor's Preface to his Paraphrase of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans.

A BRIEF

A BRIEF comparison of the Jewish and Christian prerogatives will ascertain their similarity in two leading features.—The former privilege, for instance, did, and the latter still does accrue, through God's free grace, independantly of human merit. Again, the former did, and the latter still does, entitle its possessors to be candidates for certain extraordinary blessings, conditionally attainable by them, on their compliance with prescribed stipulations.

LET us trace this description through each of the two prerogatives in question.

THAT the privilege of Judaism did, in no degree, result from personal

B 3 merit,

merit, is evident from the application of the terms *called* *, *saved* †, *chosen* ‡, and *elect* §, to the Jewish community at large. A distinction, of course, thus national and diffusive, vested alike in the vicious and the virtuous Jew : that is, every Jew was qualified to be a competitor for many special benefits, exclusively tendered to the Jewish nation, and accessible by himself, through obedience to certain moral and ceremonial injunc-

* Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my *called*. *Isaiah*, xlviii. 12.

† Happy art thou, O Israel : who is like unto thee, O people *saved* by the Lord? *Deut.* xxxiii. 29.

‡ O ye seed of Abraham his servant, ye children of Jacob his *chosen*. *Pf.* cv. 6.

§ For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine *elect*. *Isaiah*, xlv. 4.

tions.

tions. Neglectful, at the same time, of these injunctions, a Jew not only forfeited the proffered benefits, but became obnoxious to Divine vengeance. Accordingly, both individual Jews, and the whole Jewish state, repeatedly underwent severe chastisement for delinquency.

STRICTLY analogous to the prerogative of Jewish communion, is the prerogative of being admitted, through faith, into Christ's church. In some parts, for instance, of the New Testament, all the converts, in large and populous districts, are styled sometimes an *elected* *.

* The church that is at Babylon, *selected* together with you, saluteth you. 1 *Pet.* v. 13.

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sometimes a *called* * society. In other parts, the terms *saved* † and *chosen* ‡ are applied to the universal Christian church. Evidently, therefore, every individual in these numerous bodies, though at no time immaculate throughout, was, and is, invested with the venerable appellations in question ; that is, the most wicked Christian is a person called, through God's unmerited graciousness, out of the Gentile world, to receive an invaluable overture, and to be the depositary

* I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called. *Eph. iv. 1.*

† He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved. *St. Mark, xvi. 16.*

‡ Ye (all the Christians then existing in the world) are a *chosen* generation. *1 Pet. v. 13.*

of

of celestial propositions. Whether, however, he will finally reap the rewards held out by this tender, is a matter of contingency, and will depend on his personal exertions. "Eternal life," St. Paul assures us, is the appropriate recompence of "patient continuance in well-doing *."

IT is now material to observe, that many of the phrases, which express the privilege of our being qualified, through faith, to strive for the prize of everlasting glory, occasionally signify its actual

* To them, who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life. *Rom. ii. 7.*

attainment.

attainment *. Consequently, as the favour of being invited to pursue is widely remote from the blessedness of reaching eternal felicity, it must be productive of most dangerous delusion to assure ourselves of the latter acquisition, through a reliance on declarations which announce only the former. Too much caution, in a word, cannot be exerted in separating the passages expressive of a vested title to, from those which, in the same identical language, intimate merely a contingent prospect of salvation.

* This fact is demonstrated in Mr. Taylor's Preface to his Paraphrase of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. It is also most ably displayed and enforced in three Sermons by the Reverend Dr. Samuel Hallifax, now Lord Bishop of Gloucester.

CARELESS

S E R M O N I. 11

CARELESS in this essential act of theological discrimination, we may easily render the texts relative to faith a hot-bed of enthusiastic notions; and be led both to misconceive the nature, and to exaggerate the efficacy of faith.

For some undiscerning expounders of Scripture have represented certain mysterious inward impressions, styled by them "New Light," &c. &c. as tests of faith, and criterions of Christian perfection.—Elated, and at the same time confused by this mixture of rhapsody and enigma, *a great part* of their unhappy auditors fluctuate, through life, between the extremes of presumptuous hope and ill-founded despondency. Having no clear principles of determination,
they

they mechanically vary the tone of their spiritual expectations, in correspondence with the variations which take place in their constitutions, or the atmosphere. When young, they rave; when old, they mope. They resign themselves, under the pressure of sickness or a cloudy horizon, to irrational horror; and teem, upon the removal of those evils, with unwarrantable confidence. They at one season conceive themselves less than men, at another greater than angels. — The *more gloomy disciples*, in the mean time, unable to ascertain their experience of sensations which they do not comprehend, sink not unfrequently, however innocent, into incurable desperation. — The *libertine part* of the congregation, on the other hand, sanguine in their
imagination,

imaginations, and eager to embrace a system which divorces religion from virtue, find less difficulty in conceiving themselves conscious of the ecstasies required, from the very circumstance of their not being accurately defined; and confidently give scope to the working of fancy, merely because their judgments possess no standard to correct it by. They dazzle their consciences with imaginary illumination, and become speculatively pious, in proportion as they are practically profligate.

WHILE the proselytes of some ignorant teachers are thus variously infatuated, by believing that faith consists in unintelligible rapture, and that it forms a standing compensation for every moral

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ral deficiency: the pupils of other declaimers fall into an equal degree of error, by esteeming faith a perpetual preservative against the possibility of moral deviation. This rash persuasion has in no well-attested instance been realized; nor have its votaries ever acquired vigor of virtue correspondent to the violence of their presumption. The failings of human nature have palpably adhered to them, amidst all their dreams of indefeasible excellence. They have extinguished only the sense, not the capacity of guilt; have rendered themselves callous to the dictates of conscience, not insensible to the persuasions of passion. They have assumed a confidence productive of vice, a self-sufficiency obstructive of repentance; and have often prov-
ed

ed the victims of their imaginary security.

BOTH classes of enthusiasts, now defuncted upon, would probably retrench the extravagance of their respective creeds, if they attentively contemplated the history of Simon the forcerer; a man endowed with faith, yet destitute of virtue, and not accepted by God*; whose example demonstrates, that faith neither precludes, nor expiates a perseverance in criminal courses.

LET the parties, again under consideration, often reflect, that the moral precepts in Scripture are delivered in

* See pages 1, 2, 3, of this Discourse.

familiar and unequivocal language; while the passages relative to faith, most relied upon by enthusiasts, are wrapped in diction, susceptible of discordant constructions. The perspicuity therefore of the former texts will eternally supersede the obscurity of the latter: nor can men ever warrantably disobey injunctions, about whose meaning they are convinced, on account of declarations whose signification they only conjecture.

THE rational Christian, in fine, notwithstanding the exultation that he feels, upon reflecting that he is elected into Christ's earthly family, retains still his conviction, concerning the frailty of his inclinations, and the turpitude of guilt: nor does he entertain the slightest surmise,

mise, that, in becoming a Christian, he either ceased to be a man, or acquired any title to be a sinner.

FAITH brightens our expectations, and animates our endeavours; but neither irresistibly corrects, nor licentiously exculpates our vices. It conducts us within view of a most glorious prospect; and points, at a distance, to the land of everlasting life.—The vale of mortality lies between.—This vale, experience and religion jointly attest, cannot be passed in comfort, and hope of auspicious termination, without virtue: nor can virtue, the same authoritative monitors inform us, subsist, without habitual exertions of devotion, charity, and moderation.

S E R M O N II.

ST. LUKE viii. 8.

HE THAT HATH EARS TO HEAR, LET
HIM HEAR.

ACAST of language, similar to that used in the text, occurs in various parts of Scripture. The great lawgiver of the Jews, for instance, pourtrays the incorrigible character of that people, by declaring, “ that the

“ Lord had not given them a heart to
 “ perceive, eyes to see, nor ears to
 “ hear *.” Terms of like import are
 repeatedly employed by the prophets,
 and our blessed Lord.

SUCH frequent adoption of certain
 specific phraseology by inspired teachers
 seems to imply, that it possesses peculiar
 significance, and is pregnant with im-
 portant intimations. Does it not, in
 fact, summarily hint to us the intellec-
 tual failings which obstruct the investi-
 gation of truth, by an allusion to de-
 fects in the inlets of bodily sensa-
 tion?

* Lev. xxix. 3.

A PERSON,

A PERSON, we well know, apparently endowed with the organs of sight and hearing, may be disqualified by indisposition from duly exerting their functions ; and may regard all objects in an erroneous point of view. He is disturbed perhaps by the splendor of light ; or convulsed by the soothing of harmony ; and loaths a variety of appearances, which men in general look upon with complacency.

IN like manner men, seemingly enjoying the entire powers of understanding, are often incapacitated, by passion or prejudice, from properly using those powers, in relation to some particular topics. Their imaginations, in those instances, appear vitiated, and their

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judgments

judgments discoloured. They there lay a stress on cavils, which, on other occasions, they would despise ; and trample upon evidence, which, in indifferent matters, they would respect.

UNFORTUNATELY, this disorder of the reasoning faculties assumes the most virulent aspect in persons of great shrewdness and vivacity, when the former quality happens to be tinged with captiousness, the latter with levity. Men, with this cast of intellect, are often the dupes of their own ingenuity ; and embellish error, until they embrace it as truth. Having decked chimeras with the graces of plausibility, they become enamoured with those creatures of the imagination ; and hug
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the illusions which their fancy has engendered.

HENCE men of very brilliant capacity have proved frequently the most determined champions of infidelity; and been incorrigibly pertinacious in its support.

PERSONS of plain, or of highly-cultivated understandings *, though incidentally seduced into the dark paths of irreligion by the meteor-like flashing of wit, or the wily suggestions of sophistry, are continually reclaimed into the right

* “ A little philosophy,” *says my Lord Bacon*,
“ makes men Atheists; a great deal reconciles
“ them to Religion.”—*Hume’s Natural History of Religion*, Sect. 6.

track by salutary impressions from dis-
after, by an observation of the remorse
attendant on profaneness *, or by an at-
tention to the extremely noxious effects
of scepticism upon human conduct †.

BUT men, too refined to adopt truth
implicitly, and too volatile to seek it
through the medium of comprehensive
research, remain often, during life, un-
susceptible of persuasion, and impreg-
nable to conviction. They are entang-

* The most open impiety is attended by a secret
dread and compunction.—*Hume's Natural History
of Religion*, Sect. 15.

† Haud scio, an, pietate erga deos sublatâ, fides
etiam, et societas humani generis, et una excel-
lentissima virtus justitia tollatur.—*Tullius de Naturâ
Deorum*, lib. i. cap. 2.

led

led in error through a misguided dexterity of reasoning; and are rivetted in infatuation by the prostitution of superior ability. Every day multiplies the resources of wayward argumentation, and renders them more systematically perverse.

THE indispensable expedience, let us now proceed to remark, of morality has been recognized in every æra and region of the globe: while a veneration for heavenly power has been studiously cherished by the wisest legislators, as conducive to the support of morality.

A RELIGIONIST, consequently, advances his temporal as well as his eternal interests, by a conformity to God's law;

law; and illuminates the present scene, through the same creed which extends the horizon of his hopes.

THE irreligious man, on the other hand, divested of various salutary motives to self-governance, plunges frequently into excesses, that not only forfeit his title to heaven, but render him a martyr upon earth. For disgrace and chastisement are a frequent, and remorse is the constant attendant on the more flagrant species of criminality: while the spirit of intemperance and licentiousness, too commonly consequent upon a renunciation of religious restraints, contaminates our very pleasures, and renders a dissolute voluptuary the most joyless of mortals. Inordinate, through
constant

constant and unprincipled pursuit of indulgence; this unhappy character contracts an importunity of appetite, which no human fund of gratification can fully satisfy; he pants for uninterrupted rapture; and is continually in quest of what is no where to be found.

AND what is the rhetoric, what the fascination, which can attract men, in due possession of intellect, to the standard of infidelity?

PERSONS inclined to controvert the moral attributes, and governance of the Deity, propose, with an air of triumph, the following queries:

IF

If God be omnipotent, and a lover of virtue, why does he tolerate vice?

AGAIN, If God be omnipotent, and a lover of his creatures, why does he permit misery?

To the first of these questions we may reply, That if God, as moral governor of the world, did every thing which an omnipotent governor could do, God would have no moral world to govern. Virtue and vice would be extinct. Men would degenerate into machines, subject to the resistless influence of instinct. The highest order of beings would be brutes, not liable to act exceptionably, yet incapable at the same time of acting meritoriously.

S E R M O N II. 29

Consequently, though God, in such a state of things, would have no creatures that he disapproved ; neither would he have any that could entitle themselves to his approbation.

THE second allegation, That the existence of misery bespeaks a defect of benevolence in the Divine Nature; is equally open to refutation. For an omnipotent God, if unfriendly to his creatures, might evidently have denied them every species of blessing ; and rendered their lives a continued scene of wretchedness. Misery would have haunted us at every step ; and sighs and groans have been the language of creation.

INSTEAD

INSTEAD of this forlorn system, to which Omnipotence could have given birth, the Deity has introduced his creatures to an existence, chequered with a mixture of good and evil ; diversified with alternate vicissitudes of labour and repose ; and resembling a journey through a mountainous, but rich country ; where, amidst abrupt precipices and various uncouth obstacles, fertile vales are ever and anon descried, whose beauty soothes the fancy, and whose products recruit the strength of the weary traveller.

IF we cast, indeed, only a transient view upon the fair frame of nature, we shall certainly exclaim, with the Psalmist,

Pfalmist, "The Lord hath done great
" things for us!" That all-bountiful
Being hath hung in the firmament the
glorious lamp of the sun, the foun-
tain of light and gladness. He hath
overspread the earth with a verdant
mantle; he hath embroidered it with
beauteous plants; he hath bespangled
it with lucid streams. He hath placed
all animals in spheres suited to their
natures; and furnished them with pro-
perties correspondent to their wants.
The Leviathan occupies the deep; the
wild beast the forest. The Camel, sta-
tioned in burning deserts, is patient of
thirst; while animals, consigned to
frozen regions, are accoutered with a na-
tural vestment, far surpassing in comfort
the most elaborate productions of the
loom.

loom. Man, in the mean time, whose functions are complicated and arduous, enjoys a superiority of intellect, commensurate to the offices in which he is engaged.

WHEN the Deity has thus liberally endowed our mortal condition, shall we repine, because he has left in it some features, which, to our superficial observation, appear ineligible? When so much is given, shall we question God's goodness, because he has not given us every thing to which our fond wishes extend? A single act of bounty from an all-powerful being would proclaim the existence of a benevolent principle in his nature; since he might have withheld even
that

that solitary boon. When we review therefore the numerous instances, in which the Creator has consulted the accommodation of his creatures ; when we reflect, at the same time, that our great Benefactor is omniscient, we shall surely ascribe any seeming defects in the mundane system to the comprehensive deliberations of perfect Wisdom, not to the sudden determinations of malice. God grasps, at a single glance, the wide expanse of the universe. Now, in this prodigious scale of contemplation, many circumstances may be generally expedient, which are personally, or locally offensive. A human architect admits the rude beam and massive block into the most magnificent structures : nor do we blame the procedure, because

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we

we comprehend the purposes which it is intended to answer: and, if our contracted capacities could embrace the circuit of the universe, as easily as they can the compass of an ordinary mansion, we should, without doubt, perceive the relative fitness of many appearances, which our short-sighted faculties now deem exceptionable: should learn to acquiesce in dispensations which our ill-informed spirit of discontent at present condemns; and should loudly acknowledge, that the Divine architect introduces no single compartment into his works, which does not, in an enlarged view, conduce to their perfection.

SOME

SOME persons, it is here to be observed, who revere the moral attributes, and superintendence of the Deity, do still profess an estrangement from revelation. To these we may summarily suggest, that Christianity is the herald of morality; and inculcates, with additional energy, those maxims of conduct, which the voice of Reason has pronounced essential to sublunary comfort. It invigorates philosophy, and co-operates with legislation. It enlivens our natural sense of duty by the incentives of hope: and environs guilt with terrors, that cannot be eluded.—What good citizen then will deliberately endeavour to disengage, from so efficacious an engine of discipline, those malignant principles in our nature, which,

which, under every coercion, disquiet and thin; and would, perhaps, if totally unrestrained, exterminate the human race; or, which is more dreadful, render extermination eligible, as the only asylum from the horrors of general libertinism?

F I N I S.

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